Return to E. P.

ON THE TEACHING

OF

VERSE COMPOSITION

(Notes on Lectures given to Students in training at Rhodes University College, 1920 onwards),

BY

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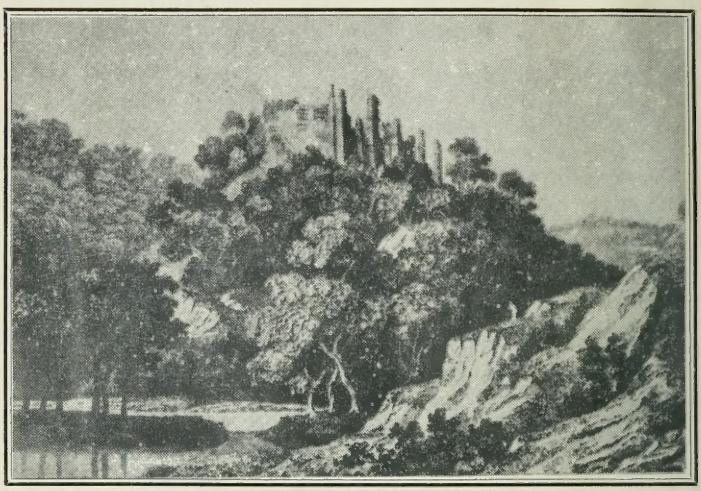

BERRY POMEROY CASTLE, DEVON

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PREFACE.

THE teaching of verse composition is now a commonplace. These notes differ a little from most teaching of this subject in aiming at making school-children write definite forms of rhythm, in aiming at making a modern language give somewhat the same intellectual training as was formerly given by the classics.

Some of my friends have tried teaching in this way in Africa and have found it successful.

The examples quoted were all, except one, written by my pupils in The Oxford High School and The Belvedere School, Liverpool.

J. F. McWILLIAM.

INTRODUCTION.

I THINK that many people who are interested in the teaching of English will be glad to see these notes. Those who knew the wonderful results of Miss McWilliam's own teaching in this school and elsewhere said sometimes that her success depended entirely on her personality and genius. She maintained that anyone using these methods could make the study of English classics and the art of composition full of vivid interest to children, and I am certain that teachers who read and follow these notes of hers will find that this is true.

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December, 1921.

VERSE COMPOSITION.

Composition is a subject of infinite variety and its teacher should be as wise and fearless as a court jester. Work with your classes even if you cannot write easily, and if your verses are the worst, why what a splendid encouragement that will be for your pupils!

Free Verses.

I began free verse composition with girls of seven and eight, on simple subjects such as the flowers and plants around us, on the days of the week, the months, the seasons and the school games.

Here are two or three poems on flowers by little girls of eight, nine and ten. There is no doubt about the poetry in these verses. This beautiful unconscious poetry is usually only found in the work of young children. It vanishes with self-consciousness, but when the self-conscious stage arrives we must meet it by setting verse compositions which need sheer intellectual effort as I shall endeavour later to point out.

In the Summer's Morning.

By Margaret Hope-Simpson. Age 8.

It is very very pretty
On a long summer's day
To see the little birds
On the lawn at play
And the flowers are all in bloom
Sending out their sweet perfume
The corn is yellow in the field
The harm that frost has done is healed
The wind is blowing on my face
It is a very pleasant place.

It is very sweet on a summer's day
To hear the stream as it tinkles away
All is calm in the early morn
As I lie on the grassy dewy lawn
In the summer's morning.
The Pansy holds up her little head
High in the air. *She* is well bred.
The Tiger lily too is there
She likes the sunshine's hottest glare.

The Rose.

By Margaret Luck. Age 9.

I am the rose with my petals so bright
And I lift up my head in the gay morning light
While the soft breezes blow
My fragrance I throw
O'er the flowers at my feet and the daisies so sweet.

I am the rose with my delicate scent
And my beautiful head by the fresh breeze is bent
And all my life long
The perpetual song
Of the birds around me makes me blossom with glee.

May-Day.

By Eirys Lloyd Phillips. Age 10.

It is the first of May,
Such a jolly day:
In the sky is the lark.
Even at six it is not dark.

The trees and the flowers are green,
And in the meadow the children are seen
Picking flowers for their May Queen.
Everyone is happy and no one is mean.
The procession will start at two,
And the cows will say "moo-moo."
The May Queen is a little dot,
Whose name is Tot.
She is so sweet
Even the dullest birds cannot resist saying
"Tweet tweet."
The people call her love
She looks so sweet with her little dove.
The children clap their hands,
When they hear the bands.
The May Queen is dressed in green
The Village people have not seen
A prettier sight.
Everything is right.

I should like you to notice such lines as

"The wind is blowing on my face
It is a very pleasant place."

and

"The procession will start at two,
And the cows will say 'moo-moo.'
The May Queen is a little dot
Whose name is Tot
She is so sweet
Even the dullest birds cannot resist saying
"Tweet Tweet."

I am sorry that I did not know that I would be taking classes on the method of teaching English when I came to South Africa, and I have therefore only odd poems with me. Even so I hope to show that a carefully thought out system and series of exercises in verse composition produces work that shows definite and dependable progress. I found the sixth form work in verse composition was always of a far higher standard than the fourth form work. There is nothing freakish or unsystematic or unscientific in making children practise definite forms of verse. It is common sense. The educated Elizabethans all practised strange exercises in the art of writing and what a standard of work they produced: We have as good hearts and brains in our commercial schools to-day as there were in the Court of Queen Elizabeth, but we fail to help them to learn the art of writing, an art that will be the solace of their leisure when they are busy men and women. We want a nation of active workers whose imaginations have been sufficiently trained to reflect on their work, and the teacher of literature has the most scope for training the imagination.

But to return to verse composition.

After this first delightful unconscious period we must invent exercises that demand some of the concentration necessary for mathematics. It was my custom to make my classes write alliterative verses, nursery rhymes, rondeaus, fables-in-verse, ballads, sonnets, Spenserian stanzas, and elegies. In fact they wrote any form of verse I could think of.

Alliterative Verse.

I used to ask the third form, average age 11, to tell me a well-known fairy-tale in alliterative verse. At first they needed help, for it is not always easy to teach verse composition. The teacher must be prepared to try to write himself and there may be days when he cannot think of anything. Nevertheless, he must take the risk. Here is

the beginning of the Story of Cinderella told in alliterative metre.

CINDERELLA.

By B. Robinson. Aged 12.

Cinderella sat amongst the cinders
Weary with her work and wishing
She might tread to music's measure
In the lovely light of coloured lamps
In the palace of the prince of picture-land.
But she must stay and sweep the ashes,
Dress her sisters, drudge and dust,
Pile their hair and pin on poppies,
See them started on their sledges.
Then the fairy flew in the fireplace
Curtsied 'cutely and then cried
"Why dear weep and wail so sadly
Dost thou want to dance till daylight?
Fetch me five fat pumpkins dearest."

It is very useful to teach this metre. It was the art of the earliest English poetry and its music lingers in our modern verses, and its caricature in our advertisements.

Nursery Rhymes and Refrains.

Nursery rhymes are an amusing exercise in composition, and one in which it is difficult to have success. I have never yet persuaded a child to write, or been lucky enough to find a child who had the inspiration to write a good nursery rhyme, a good refrain or a good ballad, but it would be a mistake to leave these exercises out because they are difficult. The effort to write them makes clear the fact that poems that look simple to read are not simple to write. You know Dekker's beautiful little poem:

"Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?"

I had made a third form learn this poem by heart. One of the children asked what "Hey nonny nonny" meant. I answered that it was a refrain and together we looked through the Golden Treasury for refrains. "Well," said Nancy aged eleven, "I think I could write a better refrain than "Hey nonny nonny."

"All right," said I, "Do."

"What shall I write on?"

"Oh, anything you like. What about a knight riding

along and make the refrain the sound of his horse's feet?"

Here is Nancy's poem:—

THE KNIGHT'S SONG TO THE SOUND OF THE HORSE'S FEET.

By N. Brocklehurst. Aged 11.

I've a hard quest before me, but that I must beat,
The dragon is fierce, he and I will meet
As I sing to the sound of my horse's feet;
Heigh-ho heigh-ho
As I sing to the sound of my horse's feet
Clump clip clump
Pitter patter pitter patter
Clump clip clump.

My sword is sharp, my charger strong.
I feel very happy as I go along.
And as I go along I sing this song
Heigh-ho heigh-ho
And as I go along I sing this song
Heigh-ho heigh-ho
Clump clip clump
Pitter patter pitter patter
Clump clip clump.

And the class thought that

"Clump clip clump
Pitter patter pitter patter
Clump clip clump"

was not as elegant as "Hey nonny nonny." It is strange how few beautiful refrains there are.

But to return to Nursery Rhymes. They are as I have said very amusing, but rarely successful. If you think of a Nursery Rhyme you will find that the subject is usually a little nursery event such as Miss Muffet's being disturbed at breakfast by a spider, and that the characters have attractive names and that the lines are very short, only two accents in each as a rule. It is fun to think of subjects for nursery rhymes such as Eating porridge, Forgetting your pencil, Being late, Having no chair, or Lacing your boots; but you may find the subjects and even good names for your heroes or heroines. But you won't get a good nursery rhyme—perhaps because the traditional nursery rhymes may have an historic origin. This is one of the best I got:—

"Poor Tommy Hart
Can't look smart
His shoes are tied with string.
Poor Tommy Hart
Won't look smart
While doing such a thing."

Punch had a series of New Nursery Rhymes a year or two ago. They were very interesting. All teachers of English Literature should read *Punch*. I hardly ever see it without thinking when I read some poem or article, "What a beautiful idea for a composition lesson." *Punch* for September 15th, 1920, had a poem called "The Moonseller," and I wished when I read it that I could walk into the Third form of the Belvedere School, and ask them what they thought of all the different moons and hear them exclaim: "There's only one," and then see the ideas of all the changes dawn on them and hear all their ideas fresh, spontaneous, contemptuous and poetic and then read "The Moonseller." They would not understand the last two verses, they could not understand the art of this poem, but how they would like the ideas.

People cannot understand modern poetry quickly. It is far more difficult than Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, but a knowledge of these classics is necessary before you can appreciate it. Modern poetry in a little poem like this or in Walter de la Mare's work looks simple. It comes pretending it is ordinary speech when it is well-wrought harmony. It comes pretending it is a child's poem when suddenly a line or a verse reveals that the writer is wise and sad and glad through much experience.

But to return to the teaching of composition.

Triolets and Fancy Forms.

You will find it very easy to teach your pupils to write Triolets. You can study the intricate rhymes of the Troubadours in 'Ballades and Rondeaus,' a collection by G. White published in the Canterbury poets. Before the war this little book cost 10d. in England. I have found it very useful. The first lesson in verse composition that I gave was in the Oxford High School, when I was a student in training. I was teaching composition in the Lower Fourth and asked the form to write a Triolet. This class had half an hour for composition homework, and you can imagine

my surprise when Rosalind A. L. Smith, aged 13, wrote three Triolets in that time. Here they are:—

(1) Bluebells kiss her way
Drooping as she passes.
The trembling aspens sway.
Bluebells kiss her way.
The ling'ring sunbeams stray
Soft on the dewy grasses:
Bluebells kiss her way
Drooping as she passes.

(2) A pee-wit rising cried
From shingles at our feet,
The ringing echoes died:
A pee-wit rising cried.
The whispering ripples sighed
In harmony as sweet
A pee-wit rising cried
From shingles at our feet.

(3) The waning daylight dies
And darkness sinks around
Soft shrouds of mist arise
The waning daylight dies.
A mystic silence ties
The eager voice of sound.
The waning daylight dies
And darkness sinks around.

Of course you will not find many boys and girls of thirteen who will rhyme so easily, but the triolet is an easy form. There are only five lines in it after all, the rest is repetition. In fact, as W. E. Henley says:—

"Easy is the Triolet
If you really learn to make it:
Once a neat refrain you get,
Easy is the Triolet.
Ah you see:—I pay my debt
With another rhyme—Deuce take it.
Easy is the Triolet
If you really learn to make it."

And there is no more to be said. They are great fun to write. The very slightest subjects must be chosen—a bouquet, a rose, a laugh, a child's tear—all are suitable.

They have their value. They set your pupils noticing form and train them so that they can appreciate the art of such poems as E. B. Browning's "Pan," or Alice Meyrell's "Shepherdess."

The Rondel, the Rondeau, the Villanelle follow in due course. You will find examples of these forms in the collection of Ballades and Rondeaus which I have mentioned. These last named forms take slightly heavier subjects than the Triolet.

I daresay that the craze for Limericks was before your time. Everyone in England was writing Limericks before the war, and I used to think it was a proof that such powers of writing as invention, quickness, ingenuity—were in us all and wasting because they were not rightly directed.

I have here a Rondel written by Margaret Luck when she was eleven, only interesting because it is a child's work.

A Rondel.

A Rondel on June.

Summer has come with its flowers so sweet,
And in wreaths in the hedges the dog-roses meet,
For the first month of summer and fairest is June
When each flower diffuses its fragrant perfume
And the sun shineth brightly this fair month to greet
And the sweet cool green grass rustles soft round our feet.
And the soft gentle wind doth prevent a great heat
Thank God, now (for life passeth only too soon)
That summer has come.
The fair birds sing gladly from yon leafy seat;
And to-day is our joy and gladness complete
And the air seemeth filled with the bee's drowsy croon
And with Nature's fair jewels the garden is strewn
Now summer has come.

Rhymed Similes and Metaphores.

Another exercise that is invaluable is the practice of making similes, because their use is one of the great arts in prose and verse, and because it is impossible to make similes unless you observe carefully.

It is easy to teach this in England, but not so easy in Africa.

If I were going to give a lesson on similes in England I would ask my form to tell me what a daisy was like. They would answer—a star, a poached egg, a shield—but the best

pupil I ever had never found more than five comparisons. When I had heard what the form had to say, I would turn to Wordsworth's poem To a Daisy, where he plays with loose types of things and finds no less than eight beautiful similes. I could use Shelley's Ode to a Skylark in the same way. But in South Africa it is not so easy. Daisies do not grow here as they do at home and the skylark does not sing. You have not yet the same wealth of poetry on familiar subjects on which to base your composition lessons. What are you to do? First keep abreast of South African poetry. Know what has been written on the flowers and birds here. There are Mr. Slater's poems. His poem to A Sunbird has many beautiful similes. You will find sonnets on the veld, the mountains, the stars, and to South Africa herself in Sonnets of South Africa selected by E. H. Crouch. There are poems by E. H. Cripps inspired by his life in South Africa, and others. Remember I am thinking only of poems that will appeal to your pupils.

When you want to write on the flowers or birds around you and can find no models, you will have to write yourselves.

Look at these thistles or Mexican poppies growing on the mounds of earth thrown up by the men making foundations for our new buildings. What are they like? They are very frail and delicate, their leaves are green like the sea round the rocks at Cape Town. They are beggar princesses starving on a mountain. They are mermaids stranded on a barren shore. They are Diana's flowers with their cold moon-like look. All this, and more, far more, you will get from your classes—and then you will put your similes together into verse and the verse that comes will never be what you expect. You may get something like this, though if I had a class to help me it would be far better:—

The Child and the Thistles.

I like the thistles growing on the rubbish-heap—
They're pests, my mother says.
I think they're princesses enchanted and asleep,
Asleep, but dancing on the rubbish heap.
I think they're sea-princesses for their leaves
Are green and misty like the waves on summer days,
Their faces are like foam along the sand.

At night the rubbish-heap's a mountain. Hand in hand
They dance on tip-toe on the very top.

Moon-fairies in the moonlight, fast, oh fast asleep,
Their eyes are shut, their petals folded up,
And they are very pale, but dance they will
With every wind. Their shadows black and still
Look angry. I like the thistles on the rubbish-heap,
They're princesses enchanted and asleep.

Sometimes at first you may have to do all the work, but not for long, and the day soon comes when, when you give a subject, you are begged to offer no suggestions as your suggestions spoil things, and that is your triumph as a teacher, and a greater triumph arrives when the class wants to set its own subjects.

I have here three examples of this work on similes written by my pupils at The Belvedere School, Liverpool:—

FIRE.

By Mildred Clegg. Aged 15.

(1) A bunch of red cape gooseberries bright
Gleaming in the sun's full light.
(2) A prisoner leaping raging wild
With mad desire his hours beguiled.
(3) A hope that always upwards tends
It blazes bright then quenchèd ends.
(4) A little life that burneth free
Influencing others with its glee.
(5) An afterglow of the setting sun
Crossed by clouds when day is done.

A RAINBOW.

(1) A fading picture scarcely seen
Vaguely mingling sheen with sheen.
(2) A brown and mirky grassy lake
Which shivers in the moonlight's wake.
(3) A head of golden burnished hair
With coloured ripples lingering there.
(4) A subject for an artist's theme
A soft and soothing colour scheme.
(5 & 6) An opal or a dewdrop clear
Yet scarce you look, they disappear.

And finally here is a poem by a sixth form girl showing how similes develop into metaphors. This last is poetry:—

A Song of the God Pan.

By Margaret Haythorne. Age 18.

I am the Spirit of Nature,
I am the shade of the trees,
I paint the colours of autumn,
I hang soft mists on the leas.
I am the soul of the primrose,
Pale as the ghost of a bride,
The deep, white carpet of winter,
Where the little snowdrops hide.
I am the joy of the squirrel,
The slender grace of the doe.
I am the friend of the nightingale
And seek to soothe her woe.
I am the peal of the bluebells,
The vermeil flush of the rose,
The scented heart of narcissus,
Where the starry dewdrop glows.
I am the moulder of distance
And lord of all green things,
I am the lover of Naiads,
Designer of butterflies' wings,
I am the gold of the sunbeam,
The moonshine pearly white,
The star-glitter on the revels
Of the elfin world at night.
I am the music of sorrow,
I am the piper of bliss,
I am the hymn of the woodlands,
My song is a fairy's kiss.
I am the worshipped of shepherds,
Existence of each strong man.
I am the son of great Hermes,
I am Almighty Pan.

To write similes is to work with the poet. I have found that I could escape the misery of explaining a lovely poem by making my classes write similes on the same subject before they knew it.

If I made them write similes for old age most of them found it like winter, like evening, like a dying fire, and without a word we could read:—

"That time of year thou mayst in me behold."

I am envious of you. It will be a wonderful thing to teach literature in Africa. The wealth of new materials dazzles me. Look out from this college. There is a bottle-brush hedge, a transformed kitchen-brush, the flower of a fairy story—Cinderella ready for the ball. There on the hill are silver-oaks glowing gold and rich amongst the other trees. The Kaffir-booms have not dropped all their flowers, and there is a sweet-scented moon-flower in the garden. Have you seen the prickly-pears in flower in Love Lane, with their strange flowers like jewels on a native princess? Look how they throw their branches out like grotesque and swarthy dancers. You are all to be envied who are going to teach literature in this romantic country where we tread ever on the verge of undiscovered worlds.

Ballads.

Though ballads belong to the misty north and not to the enamel clearness of your African skies, I should teach them in your highest forms for the light they throw on the romantic movement and the interest they add to the ballads of Coleridge, Keats and Tennyson. I should not trouble about the form of a ballad except in the highest forms.

Ballad stories deal with fairies, transformations, returns from the dead, separated lovers united usually under tragic circumstances, of hate triumphant, and of love triumphant. In the ballad world the supernatural is always possible, and the people there are always certain of their loves and hates and of what they wish to do, be it right or wrong.

The heroes and heroines of ballads are knights and ladies.

The knights have golden hair, dress in scarlet-red and lace, ride gallant steeds grey, black, brown or milk-white, beautifully caparisoned with bells on their bridles.

The villains are rivals of the lover-knights, sometimes ill knights themselves, sometimes a spying little foot-page.

The ladies are usually high-born, white handed and beautiful. They sew a silken seam or play at ball. They have yellow hair braided over their brows and when they follow their lovers they

> "Kilt their coats o' green satin
> A little above the knee,"

and lace themselves up tightly, asking "O wha will bind my middle jump?" and so prepared set out to sail the seas.

The Gonerils and Regans of ballads are jealous sisters, mothers-in-law, and witch step-mothers who transform their step-children into loathly serpents.

Ballads usually have four lines in each verse, with four and three accents alternately and rhymed alternately. Certain phrases are repeated, so such lines as

"O they rade on, and on they rade
And a' by the licht o' the moon,"

will recur several times in one poem.

The story is told in direct conversation between the characters, often in the form of questions and answers.

A good ballad always has a very dramatic climax. Three and seven are the magic numbers in ballads.

A woman will have three sons, the hero will ask three riddles. Now if you will remember these few things: that you must have a conventional hero and heroine, conventional conversation, dress, circumstances and situation, dramatic climax, repetition, and eerieness, and if you get a good story, you may be able to write a ballad. Here are two stories that have not been used:—

(1) In a deep pine-wood near the sea at Logan, there is a long flat stone. "Murder," the one word "Murder" is deeply engraved on it. A knight loved Logan's daughter. They fled together. They were tracked through the mist. He was killed where that stone stands.

He would, following ballad convention, be killed by the lady's brothers or father. She must die after returning home, but she must first ask her mother to make her bed.

"O mak my bed, lady mother," says she,
"O mak it braid and deep."

When they are fleeing they must hear their pursuers, and she will ask him what it is—twice he will answer wrong—the wind—the trees groaning—the third time you will have the dramatic climax when he looks over his shoulder and sees her brothers.

(2) The Earl of Culzean (pronounced Cullain) married a fair young heiress and took her to his castle on the rock above the sea. After they had been married a few weeks he called her one evening to walk with him along the cliff, and when they were walking he pushed her over and inherited her money. He did this with six brides and so became very rich. After he died the warder saw a coach drawn by six black horses galloping across the drawbridge. Satan sat driving it. The warder challenged the coach,

calling out "From whence to where?" and the answer was: "From Hell to Culzean's burial."

You must translate this a little before it will fit the ballad form; for one thing there must only be three wives or there might be seven, but I think three would be more moderate.

I have told these stories baldly on purpose. You want to find your own details.

But may I warn you that if you describe the lady with subtlety and try to avoid giving her yellow hair, and a grass green satin dress and white hands, and if you are tempted to describe the turrets of the rocky keep against the evening sky or the opal sea, you will be writing a romantic poem, not a ballad.

When you try to write a ballad in the old form read as models "The Riddling Knight," one of those early ballads in which the characters ask each other strange riddles, Thomas the Rhymer, an interesting fairy ballad; The Laily Worm, one of the transformation ballads; and The Douglas Tragedy, one of the most powerful tragic ballads; but of all the ballads I know I think Edward Edward is the most perfect in form. There are two climaxes, the second one surpassing the first in surprise and tragedy. There are the conventional questions. The mother asks three times:

> "Why does your brand sae drop wi' bluds, Edward
> Edward?"

The first climax comes after the third question. Then the mother asks four more questions, making seven questions in all, and the finest ballad climax is reached in the last verse.

Fables.

But if it is impossible to write good ballads in these modern days, it ought not to be impossible to write fables especially here where the animals wander about in such a friendly and conversational way.

Look out of your window and there is a waggon with a donkey team—look at these rascals of donkeys in front not pulling their weight. They will be taken and sold to old Kaffir woodcutters and then they will have to pull loads alone; no shirking then, and you will only want the donkeys to talk a little to their drivers or each other and you will have a fable.

The patient oxen might furnish material for fables to the children who know them—these goats driven out by the little Kaffir boy each morning look as if they could talk. When you see them you wonder if the little one that always leads and skips round the corner with the same jump every morning dreams dreams like La chèvre de M. Sequin.

You will find models for fables in Æsop's fables and in R. L. Stevenson's, which are usually found bound in the same volume as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and in La Fontaine's fables.

In case you are stranded without books, here is a fable of my own; but make up your own rather than use this, for with its fire, its cold, and its river, it is too English:—

'Twas a cold, wet night, but the fire was bright,
And the little dog blinked in the warm red light;
Then he felt inclined, warmth with love to find
In the lap of his mistress who was kind.
A crouch, a leap; he was soon asleep.
But these words he heard in his slumber deep:
"Oh, idle dog,
To lie like a log,
With a rat near by
That ought to die."
He jumped to the floor, he fled through the door,
Out into the cold, like a hunter bold.
By a river-side a hole he spied.
He scratched and snuffed, and clawed and puffed,
Till the rat he killed—his task fulfilled,
Bleeding, muddy, but happy was he:
"I'm not a dog
That sleeps like a log
With a rat near by
That ought to die.
And how my mistress will welcome me."
He jumped on her knee, but she pushed him away
And boxed his ears—on his glorious day:

He lies on the rug, he is warm and snug,
But he wonders Why? and he wonders How?
And he does not gaze at his mistress now.

MORAL.

Now what is the moral to this fable?
I'd tell you, friends, if I were able.
Perhaps it means you make a mistake

If you try to act dreams when you are awake.
Perhaps it means, when you don't understand
Don't punish at once, but stay your hand.
Or perhaps—Love never is won by glory,
Though they tell us so in many a story.

Elegies.

I used to try to make my pupils write elegies. I gave them the form in this way:

(1) The reason for writing the elegy.
(2) The change since the friend mourned for died.
(3) A questioning of all nature why such a calamity should have been allowed to happen.
(4) The procession of mourners.
(5) The funeral rites.
(6) A song of triumph on the birth of a soul into immortality.

You will realise without a further explanation how all this could be illustrated from Lycidas or Adonais:

(1) For Lycidas is dead.
(2) But oh the heavy change now thou art gone.
(3) Where were ye nymphs?

I used to set some such subject as an elegy on summer. I have no illustration of this from my own pupil's work, but I once talked it over with one of my cousins who was teaching at the Kendrick School in Reading. Later she wrote to me and told me she had tried setting an Elegy on Summer with great success. The girl of seventeen who wrote this elegy had no tradition of learning in her family.

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF SUMMER.

Hush'd were the winds that sweetest music play
As through the wooded vales they wend their way—
Heavy the perfume of the sleepless flow'rs.
Could Nature sleep when 'neath the leafy bowers
Of those fair nymphs (who now have ceased to sing)
All glorious Summer, Nature's Lord and King
Lay dying?
Phoebus had curb'd the fury of his team
And in resplendent majesty gazed down.
The reins hung loosely in his fingers slim.
His face was pale and tear-stained and a frown
Marr'd the broad forehead, framed with curling hair

Resting in ringlets on his shoulders bare
Like burnish'd gold poured out in channels fine
O'er ivory in intricate design.
The clouds that welcome Phoebus to his rest
Came forth and took their stand behind his car,
In shim'ring richly tinted raiment dress'd
And looked on dying Summer from afar.
The western sky was bath'd in glorious light—
Crimson and purple fading far away
To coral and to shell-pink streak'd with blue
Paler than those fair turquoise gems that strew
The margins of the lily-covered lake.
And further still soft amethyst and pearl
Blended to watery grey.
And where the great sea still and clear as glass
Appears to meet the flaming dome of heav'n
A brilliancy of orange, whose bright sheen
In ocean's polished surface then was seen.

And eastward Nyx swath'd in a misty veil
With all her host mounted on ebony steeds
Each holding high a twinkling point of light
Announc'd the coming night.

Then suddenly an awful cry was heard,
A wailing and lamenting wild and shrill
Up from the vales and o'er the rocky steeps,
In forest depths and by each tinkling rill,
Over the silver sands, across the waves
Until the Sirens in their coral caves
Caught the sad note that echo'd o'er the main.
"Summer, great Summer is slain."
Then lifting up their voices sweet, divine,
Attuned to praise the Gods with music fine
They cried, "Summer our joy our love is dead,
Why need we longer live since he is gone?
Nothing remains that's worth a Siren's song.
Lament and weep, then die for Hope hath fled."

A wild and awful scream then rent the air.
Astride the blast the Furies with their hair
Long and dishevelled came. Wing'd squadrons burst
Thro' the air and moaned and cursed
In accents terrible.
The thunder crash'd and rent the massive rocks,
And Ares sanguine-robed, with helméd locks

Split the dark heavens with his flaming sword
And Vulcan-forgéd bolts he hurled abroad,
Till gradually his fury died away
And o'er the earth did dawn the hopeless day.

A grey sky overcast with heavy clouds—
A grey sea breaking on a lonely strand—
A mist of tears that settles o'er the land—
And gaunt trees holding out their wither'd hands.
A blood red sunrise which divides the mist
And shows an island, desolate, forlorn,
(Who would believe that there was Phoebus born?)
Where hears'd in faded flow'rets Summer lies.

Ye Shepherds leave the snowy flocks to feed
On those bare pastures where once Summer reign'd;
And bring the dewy flowerets of the mead
And bid them shed a glist'ning tear
To mingle with thine own on Summer's bier.
O ye Castilian Muses come and weep.
Parnassus ne'er again adorn'd shall be
With Summer's beauty. Ne'er again ye'll sleep
Lulled by the sacred fountain's harmony.

Demeter lonely Mother grieve o'er him
Who once so pow'rful, now so low doth lie.
Wail and lament until thine eyes grow dim.
Ne'er hast thou known before so great a woe.
Not e'en when Proserpine, thy youngest child,
In the eternal darkness stayed awhile,
Where Pluto reigns o'er airy shapes and forms
That hide in frighten'd groups in the dark caves
By Acheron, or sunken in the Stygian marsh,
Lament and shriek in hollow voices wild.

Artemis slowly comes with hair unbound,
And Phoebus leading her with falt'ring step
And close behind the Horae,
Led by fair Chloris, robed in drooping flow'rs
Swaying their bodies to a mournful sound
Draw near the bier and fall in rev'rence down.
And now, O Delos Isle once crown'd with joy,
Thou art the resting place of that sad boy
So well beloved, so noble and so bright.
On thy cold shores both heaven and earth unite
In sorrowing company.

"All-seeing Zeus, what turned thine eyes away
That thou did'st not behold our Summer's death?
And Hera, Queen of Heaven, wer't occupied
In smoothing with thy lily hand
The rainbow feathers of thy charioteers"—
They vainly cry:
And as they cry—
Behold sweet Iris, Hera's messenger
Is seen descending on her glittering arc
And holding by the hand, an aged God,
With hoary hair and bandaged eyes.
Slowly he comes down from the sombre skies
And mounts the leafy bier.
And all press round to hear
His feeble voice—
"Weep not, weep not, O Gods and Men
He is not dead.

Look where in sport he deck'd himself with flow'rs
When resting 'neath the gentle Naiads' bow'rs.
Look: round his head the opiate poppies gleam:
He little thought they'd cause a misty sleep
To fall on him;
But mighty Zeus, ages long ago
Foretold that Summer should not reign for aye
But that three other Gods in turns should stay
Awhile as Kings of this fair earth of ours;
And this his sleep decreed so long ago
Was brought about by those dread scarlet flow'rs.
Then weep no more but patiently await
Until this heavy stupor fades away
And welcome russet Autumn, Summer's mate
With faces free
From care and eyes from tears"—
Thus spake old Morpheus and a silence fell on all
Who stole away on tip-toe lest a sound
Should mar the sleeper's dreams.

Out here I think you might well write an elegy on the Passing of the Rain, for all nature mourns. It would be easy to find a procession of mourners.

Rhymed Dialogue.

Exercises in Rhymed Conversations can be set on well-known stories. I found Hans Andersen's short stories

suited this work well. The Princess and the Swineherd and The Princess and the Pea rhymed daintily and put into direct conversation are as delicate as etchings.

Parody.

Nothing teaches people to observe mannerisms in writing like attempts at parodying; it gives scope for many amusing exercises—for example in teaching the play of *Richard II* set a class to parody the speech, "I'll give my jewels for a set of beads," by giving such a subject as "The queen changes places with a beggar." It might begin

"I'll change my regal robes for beggar's rags
And stain my hands with purple blackberries."

Or in teaching *As You Like It*, make the class change Jaques' melancholy speech, "All the world's a stage," into a cheerful one, "At first the infant laughing and crowing in the nurse's arms." These are very easy exercises, and they help children to discover their own cleverness—half the battle in teaching. Another pleasant exercise both for prose and verse is to put a character from one of the plays into new surroundings, for example send Touchstone on a journey in an ox-waggon—anything of that sort. This is what Barrie does in Dear Brutus when he makes Puck a country gentleman giving a house-party. What a schoolmaster is lost in Barrie!

There are many kinds of parodying. I have had brilliant results on "The Story of Bluebeard told in the styles of Browning and Tennyson." (See appendix.) Nothing discovers the absurd and exaggerated more quickly than parodying. You will learn much about this from *Punch*.

Colour.

You can get telling results by asking for short rhymed descriptions of scenes in a garden, a street, in a room, or on the veld, in which you ask your pupils to mention every colour they see, for example, looking out of our window we see white walls, red roofs, red aloes, red kaffir-boom, yellow mimosa, pink peach-blossom, white pear-blossom, green grass—many yellow flowers in the grass, terra-cotta soil, and over all the blue sky. Put all that into rhyme and you will be surprised at the result. When studying colour like this consider Tennyson's use of this artifice.

This is a good exercise for school-children who are often extraordinarily blind to the beauty of their world.

Then there are exercises in what you might call thought-colour—for example like Richard II you sit and think of melancholy things thus—

"Dreary, dreary, dreary as a bird's forsaken nest"

and

"Weary as the wind on withered grass"

and

"Hopeless as the broken aloe on the veld,"

and so on. It is much easier to think of melancholy things than of cheerful ones, though probably such happy thoughts as children shouting in the baths or playing on the sands, or the merry leaves of blue-gums or the laughter of the red flower on the veld will occur to you.

It was something of this sort that Milton did when he wrote L'Allegro and Il Penseroso.

The poetry of the early poets is easier to teach in school than modern poetry. It is nearly always possible to invent exercises that help your pupils to understand Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton—for example if you ask children to imagine the fate of Holiness separated from Truth they work out an allegory not unlike that in the first book of the Faerie Queene: You can turn page after page of Shakespeare's early plays and find inspiration for exercises in exaggeration, contrast, metaphor, colour, and rhymed conversations till there is no end to them. You can teach Milton by parallel exercises, Shelley too, even Francis Thompson, but the modern lyric is difficult to teach.

Think for a moment of some Elizabethan lyrics, they are extraordinarily childlike, they have an air of nursery fairy tales, such are "Call for the robin redbreast and the wren" and "Full fathom five thy father lies." Nearly all Elizabethan lyrics can be understood by children without explanation, but the modern lyric, though more beautiful than any, can hardly be taught—you might as well touch a dewdrop. Consider de la Mare's work, evanescent as the colour of the hills, or this poem of Mr. Harold Sampson's.

JULY.

So soon it is over and gone,
The time we lay
In the suave brooding fir-depth
Yesterday.

Where the cuckoo's love-soft call
On the hollow hill
Touching a secret chord of tears
Broke and was still.

You can point out the gentleness of the three syllables "love-soft call," but you must do little more.

The early poets were concerned to be understood, to this end they used every artifice of metaphor and simile, they painted things strongly not to be misunderstood, they wished to move the world to sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not—but many of the modern lyrists only care to express their thoughts for themselves, and care not at all for their audience. Since this is so is it not folly to give "Poems of To-day" as a set book for the matriculation examination in England and in Africa to be read by people who have not tended the trade of poetry nor strictly meditated the thankless muse?

A fact that makes it difficult to write English lyric poetry in South Africa is that so many of the veld flowers have only botanical names, and the birds have Dutch or native names. English poetry does not allow foreign words. It took two hundred years before the word 'its' was allowed in serious poetry.

I am sorry that that bird that calls so triumphantly 'Do you love?' while the mate answers sweetly 'Me, Me, Me," has not an English name.

The Dutch are ahead of us in folk-lore poetry. They have nursery rhymes and pet names for bushes, flowers and birds. Great literature is founded on folk literature. We must hurry up.

Sonnets.

Most school-children like trying to write sonnets. I was given some that reached a high standard of literary merit.

In sonnets you have plenty of choice of models for there is a book of South African sonnets that I have already spoken of, but though you must make literature a real and everyday thing by using subjects within the experience of your pupils, make them familiar with Milton's Sonnet on his blindness. It is the majestic picture and the resignation of that sonnet that raises it above others, with Wordsworth's sonnet "The world is too much with us." What a sonnet to be produced by a nation of shopkeepers! Remember Keats's sonnet on First looking into Chapman's

Homer. Ask your classes why he compared himself to an astronomer seeing a new planet and Stout Cortez? No writer has a purer taste in selection than Keats. Why did he imagine Ruth as listening to the song of the nightingale rather than Queen Esther? They were both heroines, why was Ruth chosen? Make your classes think this out.

But this is a digression.

You will notice that I have not spoken of Shakespeare's sonnets. I need hardly explain why. I am talking of poetry that follows an exact form, and Shakespeare's sonnets do not conform to the Italian model. What subjects will you choose as suitable for sonnets? There are many: Rain; drought; ox-waggons; railways; pioneers; strange drought-resisting plants. But there is no subject like the hills with their colours, their shadows and their hollows that promise to enfold and shelter from a heart-aching world, the hills where a hard driven David might elude a pursuing Saul, the hills with their rocky kloofs where a brook still trickles after three years' drought where an Elijah might be fed by ravens. Then there are the shapes of the hills; they look like castles, tables, giants, lions, camels, like toys made by Coelus and Tellus for their Titan children. They look like monsters that have thrown themselves down wearily to rest in the heat of the day. There was a poem in the *Punch* I have spoken of for September 15th, 1920, on a rock at Scilly, that looks like an old woman's house. It is not a sonnet, but that strange-shaped rock at Scilly made me think of the strange shaped hills here.

I look at them in the evening and see the seals broken and the white and black and red and pale horses gallop across them.

I wrote this sonnet on a sunset in the Karroo—the first eight lines may be of use to you:

Effigies of an antique world serenely
Sleep on the hills. There a lion crouches, there
A camel kneels to Hyperion, and look where
Saturn's last stronghold towers threateningly.

The hills transformed in vibrant melody
Glow unsubstantial in the golden air.
Austere, remote, knife-edged, they wear
Their iris-tinted splendour tenderly.

Life, Love, Death, Hope renew
Their truth. Heaven is revealed.
Tumultuous beauty thunders in the West.

The vision of the exiled seer? Ah, he never knew
Exile, for he never knew England and a field
Of uncut hay rocking the moonlit daisies on its breast.

But when you write with your classes you will be surprised at the wealth of suggestions given you. Do not be afraid of this way of teaching. Your pupils will carry you through all difficulties.

There is wisdom in teaching beginners to adhere strictly to form. They have not the right to freedom till they have mastered it. I remember Sir Walter Raleigh telling us at Oxford that he always trembled for the young man who began by writing blank verse. Nearly all poets have written sonnets to begin with—even Mr. de la Mare wrote sonnets in his early days and now he is the master of wayward rhythms.

Is it possible to teach children the meaning of poetic language? I hardly know. Few grown-up people understand. A poetic word, Mr. Harold Sampson told us in his lecture on The Language of Poetry, is one that calls up many images and the more poetic it is the more congruous and numerous are the images. In Shakespeare's sonnet—

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sung.

the most poetic word is choirs because it calls up an image of a Cathedral, of music, reverence, pomp, beauty, light, all passed away; these images are in keeping with leafless trees where no birds sing and a fit image of a time of life when light, music, beauty and pomp are lost.

I believe it might be possible to teach our classes to think out which words are poetic in the poems they read. You might ask them to tell you what thoughts certain words bring them.

These suggestions are only beginnings, but I believe they are on the right lines, not only for teaching English but for teaching any modern European literature.

I have given the impression of too much seriousness.

Literature is the joy of the heart, and the frolic of the mind, and its teacher should be mirth herself with quips and cranks and wanton wiles, and I would rather you took no notice of these suggestions and gave merry lessons than that you should follow them in a deadly and deadening seriousness.

Finally write yourselves—it is as wrong for a person who never tries to write verses or stories to teach literature as for a person who never draws to teach drawing. It does not matter if your writing is successful or not, as long as you try.

I have spoken only of verse composition in these lectures. You will not imagine that I do not think prose composition equally important, and it is as good fun. You play touch with Beauty and the rascal always eludes you.

Ah! Beauty is so fleet
You miss her everywhere.
A laugh. A call.
She's gone.
Listen. A laugh.
Where the peach and the pear
Throw fountains of light
In the tender air
She's there.
Where the fresh oak leaf
And the kaffir-boom
Are together set—
Joy and Passion
Dido and Nicolette—
She's there.
Where the white iris by the wall
Breathes the romance of Provençal—
She's there.
In the sweet bird's call
"Do you love? Do you love?"
And the answer
"Me, Me, Me,'"
She's there.
Where?
She's gone——

ON THE TEACHING OF GREEK STORIES.

In France composition and letter-writing are so carefully taught that it is rare to find a French man or woman who cannot write elegantly and with ease. This is not so in English-speaking countries, largely because teachers think grammar more important than composition, though you would find few who could tell you why they thought so. It is true that grammar helps in the teaching of foreign languages, but therefore it ought to be the business of the language teacher. The child has yet to be found who has learnt to speak grammatically from grammar lessons. Reading and writing alone teach grammatical speech, and I deplore that so much good time for general reading should be spent on grammar.

I shall suppose that you are going to teach composition from the lowest class to the Matriculation form, and that your aim as a teacher of English is to send out boys and girls who at fourteen have read Shakespeare's best known plays, the first book of the Faery Queene, Epithalamion, Prothalamion perhaps—but it is rather too much concerned with English meadows and the River Thames for Africa—Milton's minor poems, and at least four books of Paradise Lost, and if possible some of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats.

English poetry develops chronologically. It is unintelligent to read Keats before reading Milton and Shakespeare, or the Nineteenth Century ballads before some of the mediaeval ballads. I believe that by teaching the works I have enumerated even if you never get beyond Milton you will send out intelligent boys and girls. They will be able to read for themselves and they will write better English than if they read at random.

To make such reading possible however composition must be taught carefully. The art of story-telling must be studied, and the stories must be selected carefully. It is a waste of time to tell an odd story to fill in an odd lesson. Greek myths can be told to children from eight onwards, and to be familiar from early childhood with the names and powers of the Greek Gods and Goddesses, is to be more than half-way towards understanding most of the references in European poetry.

Hawthorne's stories, though it is a pity he makes the heroes and heroines tales of boys and girls instead of men

and women, are always interesting to children. You will find the "Tanglewood Tales" a help and such books as the Myths of Greece and Rome, and the Myths of Hellas.

The story of Cupid and Psyche is told with great simplicity and beauty in the first volume of Pater's Marius the Epicurean, and you will find the story of Demeter in his Greek studies.

In teaching nature myths, make them as real as you can and talk as easily and naturally as possible. Talk about spiders and their delicate spangled webs that no weaving can equal, and then drift easily into the story of proud and defiant Arachne. I should both in oral and written composition ask the class to retell the story from different points of view. The following exercises are practical.

1. A neighbour tells the story of Arachne.
   Let it be a woman who was jealous of her spinning, or a school friend, or even a lover.
2. Describe the scenes on Arachne's tapestry.
   As these scenes all described occasions in which mortals overcame the gods, the teacher will have to help. Such suggestions as Psyche overcoming Venus by performing her tasks or Ulysses escaping from Calypso, are possible.
3. The scenes on Arachne's tapestry.
   As these scenes described the downfall of man who defied the Gods, you may have to suggest Prometheus tortured by Jupiter or Ixion bound on a wheel by Jupiter.
4. Arachne's parents mourn their daughter's loss.
   You will get suggestions from the class and add a little yourself, but in all teaching of composition you must be content to suggest in such a way that your pupils think the ideas are their own.

Exercise No. 4 could be treated in many ways. Arachne might have stayed in her parents' garden and there have woven her first beautiful pathetic web. Let her parents visit her and mourn over her.

You will see that exercises 2 and 3 can only be taken with a class that is already familiar with a good many Greek stories, but any children could work out 1 and 4.

Other nature myths that I might suggest are the stories of the Kingfisher and the Nightingale. Try to make up new myths about South African birds. Why has the spreeuw a tawny tail and tawny wings? Did he perform a

service for Hyperion and as a reward were his feathers dipped in the colours of sunrise? Imagine the task he performed for the great sun-god.

Or is he Aurora's own bird clad in her livery of black and cinnamon?

You will tell any Greek stories of trees and plants that you can find and make up stories about South African trees. You might imagine the blue-gum had been a great stag fleeing before a mighty hunter changed to a tree by the mercy of Pan to escape a cruel death, and so each year he sheds his bark from his wooden antlers as when he was a deer the soft fur fell raggedly from his new-grown horns, and still he tosses his head with a free mountain air.

Other stories that you should teach your classes are Echo and Narcissus and Orpheus and Eurydice. I have already spoken of Cupid and Psyche and Persephone and Demeter. All these stories are referred to by Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. I think it saves a good deal of confusion if you give a clear description of Hades and the perilous way to Persephone's throne. You can make this out from the Odyssey, Book XI, and The Aeneid, Book VI. Get rid of the confusion between Hades and the Christian Hell, and your pupils will be in a sound position to criticise Milton's use of Greek and Hebrew mythology when they come to read Paradise Lost.

Also make them clear about the different dynasties of the Gods so that they are not confused by two names and understand that Hyperion and Apollo were both Gods of the Sun. A clear understanding of these names will simplify the reading of European classical literatures.

Keep in mind the stories that have been most beloved by the greatest poets.

Try to set home-work that gives scope for imagination. Here is a little poem written by a child of thirteen to Orpheus before Persephone singing to win back his Eurydice to life:—

ORPHEUS BEFORE PROSERPINA.

Where'er fair Orpheus wandered with his lyre
He drew forth tears from wild and savage beasts,
Tall trees bowed down to this their mournful sire,
The Gods themselves abstained from jovial feasts.

But once he had been light-hearted and gay,
When fair Eurydice walked by his side.

Now she to Hades had been called away,
And all alone he roamed the country wide.

He came at last into a lonely cave,
The way into the darksome underworld.
He entered playing softly on his lyre
To where the river Styx its spray-clouds hurled.

Not e'en old Charon could resist his song;
Smiling, he rowed him safe across the flood.
As Orpheus sang, the sleeping echoes woke
And followed to where Pluto's black throne stood.

He went before Proserpina and sang
Of her who decorates the earth above,
Of trees, of fruit, of flowers, and living things,
And how it hurts to lose the one you love.

Proserpina gave way at last and said
Eurydice might go from Hades grim,
But Orpheus must not look back at her,
For if he did she could not follow him.

Then Orpheus turned to quit the Underworld,
And close behind him walked Eurydice;
But as the light from earth came into view
He turned around, her fair young face to see.

She smiled at him, a sweet forgiving smile,
Then back to Hades, softly made her way.
He tried to follow her, but all in vain.
Once more alone on earth he had to stay.

M. Symes. 13.

In talking of the Greek Gods try to make children realise the truth of these fables. Apollo, the sun, is now as he was to the Greeks, the God of all the arts. The birds, the first musicians in the world, sing on his rising, all colours are his, and he draws the shadows. Set some exercise on Apollo's pictures. Ask the class to describe the shadows or the colours they noticed on the way to school. If they have noticed caricatures so much the better. The rustling leaves are still the whispering hamadryads, and in Africa they dance and sparkle as much as their sisters the sea-nymphs—the moving shadows in the woods are the nymphs stealing from tree to tree.

A description of a wood as a Greek shepherd saw it would be a useful exercise.

I should leave out Scandinavian mythology because we have to leave so much, and Scandinavian mythology has had very little influence on English poetry; alluring though it is, do not heed it but sail straight for the many goodly states and kingdoms which English bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

APPENDIX.

The Story of Bluebeard.

From "The Pied Piper."

By Margaret Luck. Aged 13.

Once there stood a tall house,
  Near a famous city,
With a river, deep and wide,
Flowing past on the Southern side,
And in this great house did reside
  (Although it seems a pity)
Full many long, long years ago,
A man who frightened people so,
  They'd haste back to the city.

  Beard!
It was more blue than any beard
  That ever grew before or after,
And if the people had not feared
  It would have forced them into laughter.
It was so blue (so I have heard),
That when to people it appeared
They hastened from the man so weird;
  And went back to labour,
  And talk to a neighbour
In haste lest they fell in the clutch of Bluebeard.

Now Bluebeard wished a wife to marry,
  So to the town he wended.
"'Tis clear," cried he, "I must not tarry;
  Or else my clever scheme intended,
Will useless be, ere I can find me
A lady who will ever mind me,
And willingly to marriage bind me."

He reached a house where lived a dame,
With daughters fair of widespread fame.
Bluebeard had heard, from local chatter,
Something about this very matter;
And hoped their sweet home peace to shatter,
But found that neither wished to wed—
"Well! soon I'll try again," he said.
He issued invitations next

To neighbours all, both high and low;
And also to—(he seemed not vexed)
The maidens who had scorned him so.
He gave a sumptuous banquet too,
And seemed so gentle and so pleasant,
And gave so many a gorgeous present,
And treated all (the duke or peasant)
With such delightful courtesy and grace
That soon the maids said, "What a handsome face
He has, although so blue his beard,
He is not savage, as we feared."
And soon, unto the younger it appeared
That Bluebeard chose her for his gentle wife.
They married—and for many months, their life
Was happy, but it chanced, that Bluebeard went
Afar; and she, on exploration bent,
Missing the charm her husband's presence lent,
Entered a secret room, but oh! her fear!
A row of ladies' heads!—no bodies there!—
Wives of the husband she had trusted so.
She would have fled that minute; but alas!
Bluebeard returned, and so she could not go.
He asked her where the secret room's key was;
She showed the key—he saw the fatal stain
Which always dyed it when 'twas used again.
In voice of thunder Bluebeard cried—"I slay
All who go in that room—you die to-day!
One half a quarter-hour I give—no more
Then I shall call you, you will come to me,
And then, for ever, stay behind the door"
("Oh sister! are my brothers there?" she cried)—
"Which you unlocked with my magic key,"
Continued Bluebeard, when, the door flung wide,
Her brothers entered! Only just in time.
They slew the murd'rer—and here ends my rhyme.

This is the moral—Curiosity
Will always leave its stain upon the key.

Extract from The Story of Bluebeard told in the style of Browning.

By Mildred Byrne. Aged 17.

Here Bobby, I'll tell you a story, before it's time I was gone,
A story of ancient Bagdad, with perhaps a moral tacked on,

I'll tell you a story of Bluebeard, so famous in nursery lore;
But perhaps you're a modern infant, who thinks fairy tales
are a bore?
You're not? Well, I'm glad to hear it! This Bluebeard (so
history says)
Was a nice young man, who had fallen into dreadful, dis-
graceful ways.

A handsome fellow, you'd all admit,
And a large hooked nose had he;
His eyes were of flashing blue,
His beard was that colour too:
And 'twas counted a privilege rare
Amongst all the young and the fair,
To be asked his bride to be.
Whenever he spied a maiden fair
He married her on the spot,
The poor dear soul never had a chance
Of saying she'd rather not:
For papas in Turkey are apt to be
A little bit cruel at times, you see:
And perhaps in jest o'er a hand of euchre,
For a certain amount of filthy lucre

They'll agree to hand over their youngest daughter
To the man who—well, who has practically bought her!

Well! Bluebeard, I grieve to say,
Went on in this terrible way,
And for all that he looked so gay
His wives vanished day by day!!!
And the maidens thought this alarming
Agreeing he wasn't so charming
As they used to think before.
Then somehow a horrible rumour ran
Round all the countryside,
And every maiden who heard it shrank
From becoming Bluebeard's bride!

Now in Bagdad there lived a rich merchant called Jantz,
A funny old fellow, who eyed folk askance
If they asked him for money; and Bluebeard one day
Met his daughter, fair Fatima, while on the way
To call on the Caliph: and lo! in a trice
The sight of such beauty revived his sad vice
And plunged him at once into passion so deep
That it robbed him that night of his whole beauty sleep.

Straightway to old Jantz he then hied him in haste,
And seizing his arm, "Not a minute to waste,"
He cried; "I have fallen in love with this maid,
Oh! tell me the sum that you'll have to be paid
To make her my wife." "Ah, ah!" Jantz replied,
"'Twill take three thousand shekels to make her your bride."
"Done!" replied Bluebeard; and so before long
Fair Fatima, followed by music and song,
Was married to Bluebeard, who treated her kindly,
And the neighbours all said that he loved her quite blindly.

But Bluebeard one day had a journey to make,
And he called to his wife who was making a cake
For her dear lord and master. "Oh! Fatima dear,
If you're not very busy, perhaps you'll come here
For a moment or two, as I've something to tell,
And some excellent warnings to give you as well.
I'm going away
Perhaps for a day
Or perhaps for a month or two,
And I leave you in charge:
You may wander at large,
And this is what you must do.
Now here are my keys:
This one made of brass
Will open a marvellous chamber of glass,
And the uses of these
I will let you find out;
But don't gad about,

And don't try to open the door with the curtain;
If you do—well! I warn you, detection is certain!"

A Nursery Rhyme.

By Nina Robinson. Aged 9.

Once I had a fairy-book, a fairy-book, a fairy-book,
Once I had a fairy-book,
When I was a little Baby.

But where that book has gone to now, gone to now, gone to now,
But where that book has gone to now,
Nobody knows but Baby.

That fairy-book has very nice tales, very nice tales, very nice tales,
That fairy book has very nice tales
That nobody reads but Baby.

That fairy-book is shabby now, shabby now, shabby now,
That fairy-book is shabby now
Through nobody else but Baby.

But still I'll keep that fairy-book, that fairy-book, that fairy-book,
But still I'll keep that fairy-book
For it's very, very dear to Baby.

And I *will* keep that fairy-book, that fairy-book, that fairy-book,
And I *will* keep that fairy-book,
To read to my own little Baby.

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